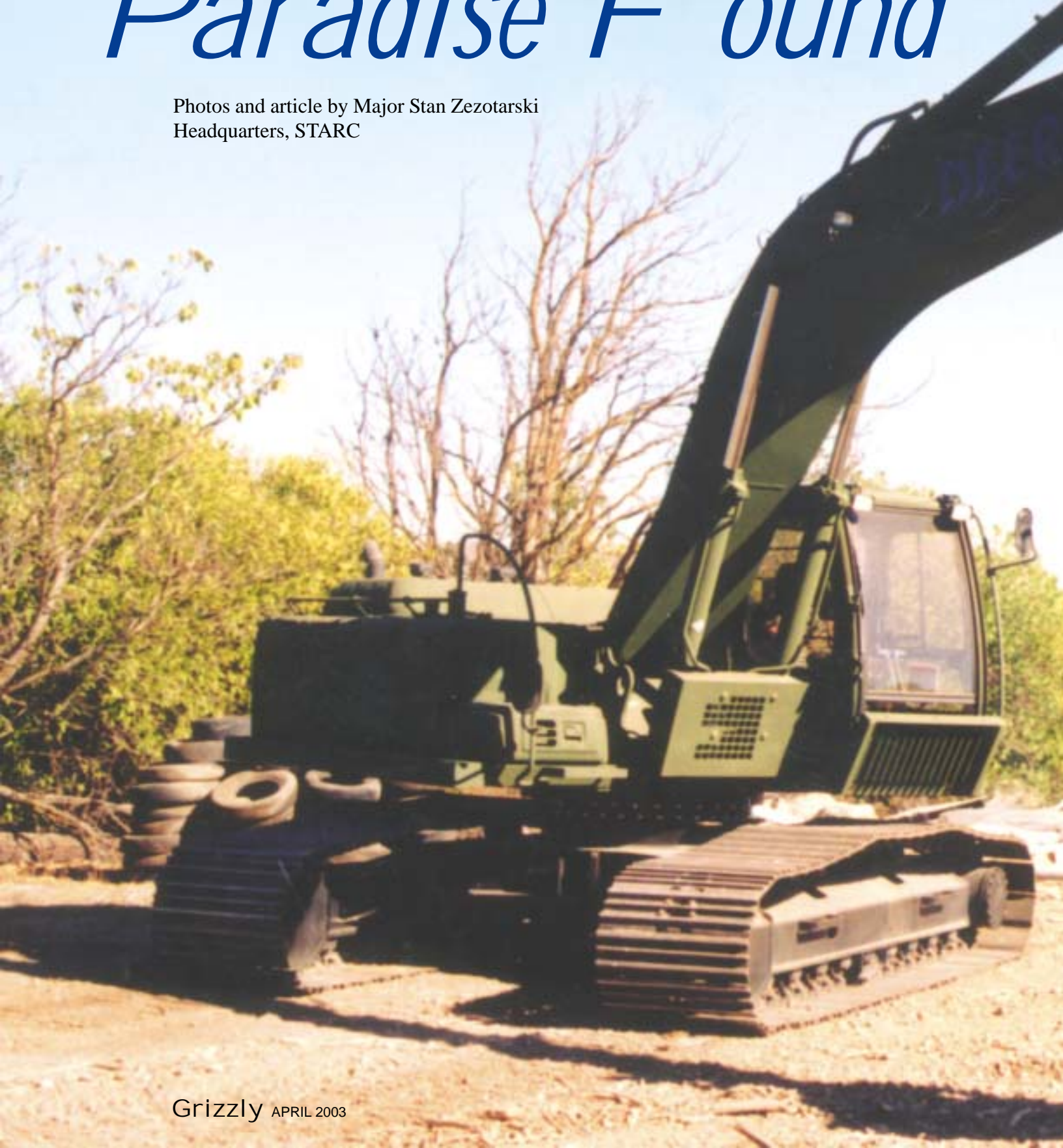



Camp Roberts: An Engineer's *Paradise Found*

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Camp Roberts' rustic World War II-era buildings and spacious training grounds are an engineer's paradise as well as an opportunity to tackle the California Army National Guard's challenge to improve its training facilities.

Camp Roberts' Deputy Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Larry Kimmel, has laid the groundwork for attracting engineers from all branches of the military service to train at the installation. He recently submitted proposals to the 84th Engineer Construction Battalion to renovate 15 buildings at Camp Roberts—including an Internet café, barbershop, soldier's service area, and a Cappuccino Shop. The 84th, (an active duty Army battalion headquartered at Schofield, Barracks, Hawaii) recently completed similar work at Camp San Luis Obispo and is considering returning to the area to assist with other renovation projects in the future.

The 145th Engineer (Construction Support) Company is scheduled to come on-line in 2003 with nearly 150 soldiers and more than 200 line items of equipment—including a crushing and screening plant. The company will be headquartered at Camp Roberts with a detachment in Sacramento and will consist of quarry, equipment, asphalt, and maintenance platoons. The company will be part of the 749th Maintenance Battalion under the 49th Combat Support Command's 115th Area Support Group.



This is not an ad for Jurassic Park. It's a piece of heavy equipment that Guard members can learn to operate.

"We already have nearly 30 names to fill vacancies," said Sergeant First Class Mike Grove, slated to become the company's first sergeant. "We already have some of the heavy equipment here to launch the company's training."

Young soldiers joining the company will have the opportunity to learn an engineer military occupational specialty, and the chance to use these skills to land a job in the private market. Grove said that the unit has connections with a nearby community college, where new unit soldiers will have an opportunity to learn additional skills that will help them sharpen their engineer skills, and perhaps land them a job with the private sector construction company. The community college has a strong track record for placing its students in full-time civilian jobs.

"We have a lot of commercial equipment that soldiers would use if they worked in outside construction," Grove said. "A lot of young people can come into the company and launch a career in real-world construction through the hands-on training they will receive here."

These same soldiers will get "real-world" experience at Camp Roberts, according to Lieutenant Colonel Erik Brun, director of Installation Support at Camp Roberts. The company will have a quarry

training area to dig material, improve roads and parking areas, and to improve training sites for a sister company, the 315th Port Construction Company (PCC) to train for its mission," Brun said. "One of our major projects will be to help develop training areas where the 315th PCC can use its pile drivers."

The 315th Engineer Company, headquartered Port Hueneme with a detachment in Redding, California, is a second company that the California Army National Guard will acquire in 2003. The company will have "pile drivers"—hammer-like cranes for pounding poles used for piers and docks into lakes, rivers, and ocean bottoms—and other port construction equipment. Camp Roberts' ponds are excellent areas where the company can train on its pile drivers, and the Camp's buildings are opportunities for the 315th's electricians and plumbers to help renovate.

With its heavy equipment, the 145th will have ample opportunities to dig, move dirt, and pave roads. Brun envisions opportunities to improve ranges and access roads. More important, he foresees fewer training restrictions because of Camp Roberts' environmental history. Camp Roberts definitely offers exciting opportunities for engineers in an engineer's paradise. 🐾